



City of Somerville

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

City Hall 3rd Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

OCTOBER 26, 2021, MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was conducted via remote participation on GoToWebinar.

NAME	TITLE	STATUS
Sarah Lewis	Co-Chair	<i>Present</i>
Cortney Kirk	Acting Co-Chair	<i>Present</i>
Frank Valdes	Member	<i>Present</i>
Deborah Fennick	Member	<i>Present</i>
Andrew Arbaugh	Member	<i>Present</i>
Tim Talun	Member	<i>Present – Arrived late</i>

City staff present: Andrew Graminski (Planning & Zoning)

The meeting was called to order at 6:03pm and adjourned at 8:35pm.

PUBLIC MEETING: 16 & 20 Medford Street

The applicant team presented façade design concepts for a four-story general building in the MR4 zoning district. The team also reviewed the site plan, landscape plan including the green roof, and their zoning compliance chart.

The Commission and applicant team discussed the streetscape design, drop-off area, vehicle and bicycle parking, the façade designs, and possible ways for improvement. The Commission all agreed that they had a hard time understanding the façade treatments, materiality, and massing intent. They asked the applicant team to reinforce their renderings and materiality choices.

The Commission and applicant team continued the discussion by speaking about the continuous datum that extends the length of the building, the scale of the bays, and the possibility of minimizing the cornice that separates the ground floor from the upper floors. The Commission also asked the applicant to provide a material board with each concept to help understand the range of the materials proposed for their next submission.

Following a motion by Member Talun, seconded by Member Fennick, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to continue the design review.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

PUBLIC MEETING: 50 Webster Street: Building

The applicant team provided an overview of the 9-story life science building and presented schematic design options, including three façade and three massing concepts. The design approach relied on the history of the site as a glass factory building and the materials were chosen to be successful in Somerville and stand the test of time.

The Commission and applicant team discussed the significant location of the building, the possibility of enhancing the prominent corners, massing preferences, and materiality. There was also discussion about the importance of integrating the proposed plaza with changes to the adjacent streets and sidewalks to improve the Webster &

Prospect intersection. It was noted by the City that this was being redesigned as part of the Union Square Streetscape project and had not yet advanced to the point where the design team could respond to this.

Member Arbaugh lost power and was unable to continue the discussion.

Following a motion by Member Talun, seconded by Member Fennick, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to recommend massing option 3.

Following a motion by Member Fennick, seconded by Member Talun, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to recommend façade option 3.

Member Arbaugh rejoined the meeting.

Following a motion by Member Talun, seconded by Member Valdes, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to continue the design review after the applicant team incorporates additional design guidance provided by the Commission.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

PUBLIC MEETING: 50 Webster Street: Civic Space

Member Valdes recused himself.

The applicant team discussed the proposed plaza type Civic Space in its urban context and neighborhood. The team discussed their preferred design concept for the Civic Space, precedent ideas for seating and other plaza features, storm water management ideas, and their native species planting strategy.

The Commission and applicant team discussed the zoning requirements for a plaza, how the space feels programmatically light, the possibility to add more fun and color into the space to keep with the unique neighborhood that it is located in, the opportunity to add a cut glass reference into the design as a nod to the history of the site, the streetscape, and the use of hardscape and circulation.

Co-Chair Kirk summarized that the Commission was in favor of more “pop” for a Union Square project. The Commission asked to see more detailed information on the grading; to understand where there is potential for a sloped walk versus a ramp. Co-Chair Kirk also noted that there was interest in knowing what the site could be like at night, ways to reduce some of the hardscape, possible programs for the site, and how the canopy/overlook near the train station could tie into the site better.

Following a motion by Member Arbaugh, seconded by Member Fennick, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to continue the design review.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

NOTICE: These minutes constitute a summary of the votes and key discussions at this meeting. To review a full recording, please contact the Planning, Preservation & Zoning Division at planning@somervillema.gov.